

## I'm gonna feel alone forever by pinkpurpleblue

**Series:** [Except late at night \(maybe I'm not\) \[2\]](#)

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**Characters:** Eleven | Jane Hopper, Kali Prasad, Martin Brenner, Steve Harrington, various OCs

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**Summary:**

One, Two, Three, Four, Five, Six, Seven, Eight, Nine, Ten, and Eleven.

Having numbers as names makes math confusing, but it's just another thing they'll all have to learn.

(Oneshots set in the universe of 'I'm getting used to the thought' an AU where Steve was raised in Hawkins lab.)

# 1. Dictionary

## Author's Note:

I got a lot of positive responses to the idea of making an in-universe oneshot book so here it is! There's no real plot to this one, since it's for mostly flashbacks that don't really fit into the actual story but I'm still excited. Wanna know more about Seven and Eight's friendship? How did Seven get the name 'Steve'? What were the other kids like? All these questions will be answered and more! And hey, if y'all even have something specific you wanna see, let me know! I doubt there'll be any requests for my little story, but if there are, I'd be happy to write them!

With that out of the way, just to let y'all know, I go a little more in depth about Steve and the other kids' shitty childhood in this one, so please heed the child abuse tag!

Tears are running down Seven's face, and he tucks himself further into the corner. He raises his fist to his face and bits down hard on his palm. It muffles the sound of his crying but not enough so switches, slapping his hand over his mouth and holding it. Crying is dangerous here, he told Eleven that once, when she was a baby. She's a couple of years old now, still learning that there are no safe spaces here, to never stop looking over your shoulder. He thought he had learned that kind of thing years ago, but here he is, openly crying. He feels stupid and it only fuels the choking feeling in his throat.

New words were hard to come by, but he didn't like this one. He files it away with all the words Papa's said with tight lips, furrowed brows. It goes right in the box with *disappointment*, and *weak*. Papa used to be calmer, nicer. Then he'd declared him and Eight *lost causes* - another set of words that go in the box. Despite the sudden change

in Papa that day, Seven liked being paired with Eight, it made him feel stronger. He shouldn't be surprised when the new word comes out. He thinks it goes with *disappointment* and *weak* , but it also seems different, like it should start a new category.

“ *Useless* .” He whispers, the word coming out shaky. He thinks it's worse than the others. The way Papa had shouted it, and the way his fist had slammed into the table before he said it. Seven didn't like this new category, it was scary. He would have to ask Eight about it later if he didn't end up in the cold room for crying. He's curled up in a corner just outside the testing room, Papa had just told him to leave but didn't tell him where to go, didn't call anyone to take him anywhere.

He wants Eight, but he saw her get sent to the doctor earlier. He thinks about finding one of the others but he doesn't know them that well. He'd talked to Three and Five a bit, played quietly with Four once. He thinks of Eleven briefly but he turns that down quickly. Seven's meant to be stronger, to be able to comfort her. To hopefully help her enough that she doesn't need to be comforted.

His lungs are aching now, and he lets go of his mouth to take a few shaky breaths. It gets too tempting to let out a whine, so as silently as he can he covers his mouth with one hand and starts to slam on his thigh with the other, his eyes clenched shut. There's just enough pain to focus and he hopes he can keep it together enough to make it back to his room.

Suddenly, there's a hand over his, holding it in place, and Seven's eyes fly open, and he flinches back into the wall. After a second, he realizes it's just Six kneeling in front of him. Only, there's a guard just behind him, probably meant to escort him somewhere. Instead, the man just stands there, dazed, staring into the wall.

Six must notice him looking, “Not much time.” the other boy says, and Seven just then notices the blood dripping from his nose. “I don’t know the word, but it’s like bored.”

Seven remembers then, that Six can change what other people are feeling. And he was good at it, from what Seven’s heard. He wonders if he learns nice words in the testing room. Seven doesn’t have many of those, only *good*, and *happy*. Eight had called him a *dummy* once, and even though Three said that it’s not a nice word, Seven felt happy when she said it, and she was smiling; so he puts it in the nice category anyway.

“You’ll get in trouble.” Seven says because it’s true. The guard won’t forget that Six used his power on him, and when it wears off he’ll be angry. Six looks at him weirdly and takes a second. Seven knows that face though, he does it too when he’s trying to put words together. He doesn’t know many, so it’s hard to say what he means sometimes. But Six should be fine since Seven’s rarely seen him without a book. He must have read his way through the whole library by now.

“I’ll be fine.” He finally says, “They like me, but not you.”

Seven might understand what Six is trying to say, but it sounds too close to his new word, sounds too much like a fist hitting a table. There’s a choking sound that tears its way from the back of his throat and the tears that barely started to fade come back stronger. He bites down on his palm again, his teeth digging into the skin.

“No!” Six says, catching his wrist and pulling it back. “Let me

calm.” He gestures to where they’re now holding hands, “Please.” He looks panicked, and his voice cracks on the last word.

Seven nods silently, curious and desperate to stop the ache of his lungs and his head. Six nods back and squeezes his hand slowly. It doesn’t take as long as Seven thought it would, because it’s not even a second later when the pit in his stomach fades away, and the urge to cry follows. He feels nice, and even though he can remember his new word he can’t understand why he was crying over it. He feels like when Eight stole a card game from some of the scientists and they pretended they knew how to play, or like when El called him “Seb” and he smiled so wide at the fact that she said something to him first, instead of the scientists.

“Thank you.” He tells Six, who slowly stands up and pulls Seven up with him. “I’m sorry,” He says because he has to, “Never talked to you.” He feels bad, but not enough to break through his calm. He’d never really talked to Six, even though there had been a few chances. Six was the opposite of Seven, he knew a lot from always reading, never snuck out, and always followed the rules, except now, all so he could help Seven.

“Not your fault.” Six says, pausing for a second. “I never talked to you,” he leans in, “Eight is scary.”

He can’t stop a laugh from bubbling up, so different from the crying he was doing just a few minutes earlier. “She is.” He agrees because it’s true.

Six glances back at the guard and Seven follows his gaze, the man is still standing there, but he’s starting to shift around. “You should go.” Six says, and Seven nods sadly.

“Thank you.” He whispers, letting go of his hand finally. Reluctantly, he starts toward his room, forcing himself not to look back. He can already feel Six’s influence wearing off, but he’s too tired now to cry anymore. So instead, he slips quietly into his room and starts to draw. He keeps tearing out pages of his notebook, but finally, he draws something that he thinks is good enough to thank Six.

The next night, he stops time and makes his way to the library and stays just long enough to leave the drawing on the table. It shows them both together, cheering while Eight punches a guard in the face. He folds it in half so any wandering guards don’t find it, and writes *Six* sloppily on top of it.

## 2. S(t)even

### Summary for the Chapter:

It's an eternity and a dozen memories later that El finds herself in the familiar darkness again.

or

El's perspective of chapter 12 from 'I'm getting used to the thought'

### Notes for the Chapter:

Hey y'all. So fun fact I wasn't sure whether or not to write chapter 12 in Steve's perspective or El's, and even though I eventually decided on Steve, I could get El's version out of my head. So here we go!

It's an eternity and a dozen memories later that El finds herself in the familiar darkness again. It feels different from the first time when she talked to Eight through the car radio. This time feels like she's being pulled toward something but the tether is comforting, so she lets herself be guided to whatever is at the end of it.

It's not obvious, but she feels herself shifting. She tentatively puts a hand on her head when she no longer feels the ends of her hair tickle her shoulders. There's nothing there, just the old feeling of a buzzed head. She's shorter, too, and her clothes have changed back into the old scrubs she used to wear.

It's confusing because El can't remember this ever happening in the familiar dark, and it scares her. She has so much more now, she can't

go back to being Eleven, she really likes being El.

But Hopper wouldn't let her go back there, he wouldn't. She feels stupid for clinging to that thought but she does. It feels nice to think that way, that Hopper was just *there*, that she could slam doors and yell and he didn't leave or speak to her in that cold way that Papa did. Hopper said sorry when he was wrong and he didn't make her feel stupid when she didn't know a word or when she took a long time to learn how to read a clock.

It's a nice word. A new word to her. *Trust*. It's kinda like how she felt about Seven and Eight, except she doesn't worry as much about Hopper, because Hopper was an adult and he had people like Joyce looking out for him. And she likes Joyce, but she feels uneasy around her because then she starts to wonder what it would be like to have a mom. Which is weird because El does have a mom, she's met her. But she wonders what it would be like she and her mom were normal, then she wonders what it would be like if Joyce was her mom.

She doesn't let herself think about that a lot, but right now she doesn't push the thought away, just for a little bit of comfort while she walks in the dark.

It's not long until she sees him. It's like seeing Kali for the first time all over again. He's exactly like she remembers him, which she selfishly likes because she wouldn't recognize him if he wasn't shifted like she is.

"Seven," El says, out loud. She tries to keep her voice from breaking, she's older now, even if she doesn't look it. She's older and she got out, all by herself. She wants Seven to know that.



He turns to look at her, blinking and staring for a minute before looking down at himself. Probably realizing he's younger too. She wonders what he looks like older. Does he have curly hair like her? Is he tall? She doesn't have a lot of reference for what older brothers look like.

"El-" Seven starts, choking before he can say whatever it is he wants to say. She wants him to keep talking because his voice feels the same as when she hears Hopper snoring in the next room over in the cabin. *Safe* is the word, or at least she thinks it is.

"Seven, I-" She starts, and just like him, she stops. Her throat is dry. She doesn't know what she wants to say because she never thought she'd ever see him again. *I missed you maybe? or I got out, I did it ?*

*I'm scared.*

"You need to wake up." He says, "El, you can do this, you can pull yourself out of whatever this is."

He sounds so sure, and it's different from what she remembers. Seven was always shaky when he talked, couldn't fake not being scared like Eight could. But here he is, and he looks young but he sounds older. He seems so sure that she can break out of this, but she's never felt so out of control. Even when she's in the darkness there's an edge to it, she can't get any sort of grip around it.

"I can't." El's definitely crying now, and it's the exact opposite of how

she wants Seven to see her, because he taught her not to cry, that it wasn't safe and here she is. "I want to go home." She tells him because it's not enough to have him there, she wants them both to be somewhere safe and she wants Hopper and everyone to meet her brother and she wants him to know that she found people that are good even when Eight had always said that good people didn't exist.

"I'm sorry." Seven says suddenly, "I left you and I shouldn't have. I—" And now he's crying, and El doesn't hesitate to run to him and wrap her arms around his waist and she doesn't notice how tight she's holding him but she can't let him go because Kali had turned so angry and she can't lose Seven like she lost Kali.

But she doesn't want to say any of that, doesn't think she can, so she lets Seven move around enough to kneel down and hug her back. It feels really nice, to hug her brother and she thinks he feels the same because they just sit there for what feels like another eternity.

After that eternity though, he moves his hand to the back of her head, and they both feel it at the same time. Her hair is back to how it was before the dark shifted her, and she pulls back.

Oh.

Her mind is running a mile a minute trying to remember everything she can about Steve Harrington. She hadn't paid any attention whenever anyone talked about him. She knows he used to date Nancy, which she's definitely gonna ask him about later, and knows that Mike once called him an *asshole*. And she doesn't want to hurt Mike, but she's gonna talk to him too because he can't talk that way about her brother.

“Steve.” She says carefully, it’s close to Seven, like how El is close to Eleven. She wonders how he got it, she hadn’t chosen her name at first but it was nice to have everyone call her El, it was different. She really likes it now, she likes that it’s normal, that she chooses to be called it.

“Yeah, that’s me.” He responds, “Sorry.”

She ignores that last part because she can’t think about what he’s sorry for so she goes back to the name thing.

“Ste-ve.” She sounds it out slower. “I like it.” She says because she does.

Steve smiles.

“Think you can get us home, El?” and she thinks she can, because they’re Steve and El now, not Seven and Eleven, they’re older and they got *out*.

She nods.

### 3. Chapter 3

#### Summary for the Chapter:

Eight's strength is not an illusion; it is, however, largely exaggerated.

Seven is shaking.

Eight knows because she can feel it. They're sat side by side, huddled in a corner they're not supposed to be. It looks like a storeroom, and it smells nice, and she thinks maybe it's where they store food. The guards, and scientists, and doctors have to eat after all, in the long hours they spend in the lab. Eight doesn't know for sure, though. There's an emptiness in her stomach that aches.

She'll make noise about it later. She's good at that. At making herself bigger than she is, making herself into sharp edges. Really though, she just feels- small. The lab is huge, and there are not many dark corners to hide in, so she doesn't bother.

But Seven seems to know those dark corners well. Maybe it's his powers, or maybe it's just practice, but where she makes herself impossible to ignore, he seems to slip into obscurity, where you're not sure if he was even there at all.

He has not managed that today.

Both of them have their knees tucked up into their chests, Seven much more than she does, limbs tense and painfully locked into place. She can feel his legs twitch against hers. His small frame is

shaking, and last she checked, his eyes were unfocused and glassy. She had taken him out of the cold room and into this storeroom, and she's not sure if he's aware she's even here.

If he were, if he could just *talk* to her, she would know he's alright. It's not uncommon to shake after the shocks; she knows that. They all know that. When you go into the room and see the crown, they stick the pads to your skin.

It was supposed to stimulate different senses and muscle memory to do...something, Eight's not sure. But the point is, they all know the way your muscles twitch even hours after you take the pads off. But Seven is shaking and twitching, and he's not responding.

For Eight, anger is a safe emotion. She knows it, knows what it means, knows the definition, how it feels.

Right now, she thinks she is scared. It's not that she's never afraid, but this kind of fear sits deep in her stomach, takes its place in her heart.

Seven is shaking.

Eight reaches her hand over and unclenches his fists for him. There's blood from where he's dug his nails into his palm. She holds his hands in hers, keeping them from closing again.

She is not sure what to do. If she were younger, she might bring

seven to a doctor. But she is older, twelve, not a child anymore, and she is wiser. A doctor would bring nothing but more pain to them both. Seven is meant to be in the cold room, and she is supposed to be shut up tight in her room. But he is also not supposed to be shivering so badly.

She blinks. His hands are still shaking in hers.

“Five.” She hears herself speaking in the quiet of the room. “I’ll get you to Five.”

Eight doesn’t know Five. She hasn’t talked to them, never seen them outside of passing each other in the dim halls of the laboratory.

But she does know one thing, that Five can heal. She’s never seen it happen, but she’s heard people talking about it.

With a new sense of determination, she stands up and pulls Seven’s arm around her shoulder, holding up most of his weight. He shivers, small quick breaths wheezing out of him.

Eight walks him carefully out into the hallway. She glances nervously around before continuing. Seven's power was usually their safety net when they snuck out like this. Eight couldn’t hide them like Seven could. She hadn’t been able to learn how to make herself disappear yet. Adding was easy; taking away was harder.

Still, she at least knew her way around the lab and the direction of

Five's room. Eight didn't think about what she would do if Five wasn't there.

Seven, getting heavier by the second, lets out a loud cough, gasping for air. Eight quickly slaps a hand over his mouth to dampen the sound. Readjusting his weight leaning against her, she quickens the pace. Luckily with no more close calls, they make it to the end of the hall. Struggling to hold him up, they both collapse in front of Five's door.

Sitting Seven up, Eight stands on her tiptoes to reach the hidden panel. Jumping up and smacking it with her fist, a panel swings out, with a keycard swipe at the top and a place for a password at the bottom.

Whenever they did this, they would usually give each other a boost to put in the password. This time though, Eight has to stand up as tall as she can manage and reach her arm up as far as it can go. Luckily it's just high enough for her to put in the code, and the door begins to open.

Five is in their room, curled up with a thin blanket on their bed, half colored in drawing in front of them. They startle as Eight hooks her arms under Seven and drags him into the room.

"Eight?" Five says, stumbling out of their bed. Eight sets Seven, still shivering, down at their feet. Her arms are sore, and her lungs burn from having to practically carry him all the way, but she did it.

"Please." Eight responds, voice cracking. She's glad Seven's not

awake enough to call her on it, “Help.”

Five stands there for a moment, and just as Eight is about to shout at them, they drop down to their knees, shifting Seven towards them. They glance up at Eight, making eye contact for just a second before placing their hands on his chest.

They close their eyes and go still for a moment, and Eight can see a strange sort of light emanating from their hands. It passes under Seven’s skin, traveling a clear path along his veins, lingering in his chest for a long time.

Eight watches in awe. She had never seen Five use their power before, and it’s beautiful. The light is so bright and vibrant. As it passes through Seven’s lungs, he inhales a full, sharp gasp. Five slumps back, taking their hands off of Seven. They seem tired, and the very tips of their fingers are solid black.

Eight leans over Seven, relief flooding through her. His breathing is much fuller, more even. His hands are still shaking slightly, but the rest has calmed down.

“Seven?” She asks, restraining herself from slapping him awake.

He lets out a groan in response, and she throws her arms around him, her head on his chest. She can hear his heartbeat steadily, and she bites the inside of her lip to keep from crying.



“Thank you.” She says to Five, who already crawled back up on their bed. They just nod, staring at something on the wall. Eight glances over and sees a kind of map carved into it. Eight pretends not to recognize the layout.

After a while, Seven is able to stand on his own. He’s still really out of it, but it’s enough for Eight to be able to lead him back to his room. She lays him in bed, and goes to walk back to her room. She closes the door and tries not to think about the writing on Five’s wall.

### **Notes for the Chapter:**

Hey y'all! I wrote and uploaded this on mobile, so if the formatting is weird, I'm sorry, I'll fix it later when I'm on my laptop.